RESENSIES/ REVIEWS

Duck, R. *Worship for the whole people of God. Vital worship for the 21st century* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), pp. xxii + 334. ISBN: 978-0-664-23427-0
http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v35i1.15

As teachers of Christian worship, we are always reflecting on and seeking whether we have the best possible resources available to welcome and guide our undergraduate students into this critical field of studying and doing theology. Well, cometh the hour, cometh the book! The majority of the scholars in the field have the greatest respect for James F. White's influential textbook *Introduction to Christian worship (Third Edition Revised and Expanded* – 2000). However, what was helpful at the end of one era is not necessarily so at the beginning of the next.

White's work profoundly influenced Duck's book. She follows the same phenomenological approach by describing what Christians do when they come together, but differs deeply in that *participation*, *diversity* and *culture* are far more thoroughly addressed in teaching and leading worship. Instead of describing the language of time and space in which Christians worship, she takes our rootedness in context, culture, location – briefly, where "the people" are – as serious markers for departure. From this "given" the traditional *ordo* of gathering, serving the Word, (*and)* sacraments, and commissioning into pastoral liturgies is still followed – and even also with the same flow of going through the gears of historical roots, theological reflection and pastoral remarks – but the difference (reading: value) being, however, that it is much more conscious, reflective and attentive of the *worship for the whole people of God* – which makes it indeed *vital worship for the 21st century*.

It is interesting to note that this vital insight is stressed for the worship of the church, because it is discovered anew in the classroom. Put differently, this book thoroughly addresses the issues of diversity, difference, and culture, not simply because of their theological weight and importance for the church's worship, but also as an important way of doing worship as the whole people of God in the studying thereof together. Diversity, differences and cultures are not only envisioned as out there, in church and in worship, but also, already, in here, in the studying thereof. One of the great benefits of this book is that hospitality and justice are thought through not only for worship of the whole people of God, but also for the teaching thereof in studying worship with the whole people of God. The whole people of God are envisioned not only in the liturgy and worship of the church, but also

in the world of the liturgical classroom where we *do* Christian worship. The worlds (publics) of church, academia and society are much more integrated in this work, and it shows especially in the author's sensitivity for dealing with issues (reading: gifts) of sexual orientation (LGBT), gender equality – both in terms of marriage and ordination – and worshipping with people of different ages (especially the presence of children) and those with physical or mental disabilities.

Of course, this work is written from a North-American perspective, but at least it is honest, sensitive and critical about this. In addition, it endeavours to emphasize and embody the giftedness of historical roots *and* relevant connections, being simultaneously contextual *and* counter-cultural worship. *Lex orandi*, *lex credendi* and *lex convivendi* thus apply not only for worship, but also in teaching and studying, as well as in society and community. At least for the time being, we have a critical, hospitable, open and more accessible resource to help develop the epistemological transformation of our liturgical curricula in Southern Africa.

Rev. M. Laubscher
Department of Practical Theology
Faculty of Theology
University of the Free State
South Africa

K. Nürnberger, *Informed by Science, involved by Christ, How science can update, enrich and empower the Christian faith* (United States of America: Xlibris, 2013), pp. 264, ISBN: Hardcover 978-1-4836-0595-1. ISBN: E-book 978-1-4836-0596-8.
http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v35i1.16

"Men despise religion," wrote Blaise Pascal. "They hate it and are afraid it may be true. The cure for this is first to show that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect. Next make it attractive so that good men wish it were true, and then show that it is." As someone who has a degree in Geology, has been a minister in a mainline denomination for 40 years, and aspires to develop missional congregations I believe that this should set the agenda for Christian apologetics in today's, increasingly secular and scientifically influenced, world. It is my experience that many (although not all) who accept the validity of much of what science has discovered in the last two centuries despise the gospel because of what they perceive to be the ridiculous reasons many Christians give for rejecting the assured results of honest research especially in the areas of biology, geology and astronomy. This is all the more galling since many have a totally literalist view of interpreting the scriptures that quiet frankly, biblical hermeneutics demonstrate, is not warranted. Then, in addition, many Christians claim experiencing miracles and answers to prayer that are either trivial, can be explained as coincidental or on occasions may even be palpably false.

Nürnberger sets out to fulfill the first objective of Pascal's program by trying to establish the credibility of the Christian faith from a scientifically philosophical perspective, so that those influenced by science will begin to think about it seriously. In my opinion he does this brilliantly in the first half of his book. He begins with a very well reasoned polemic against the disastrous results of modernity, whilst admitting that it has been very beneficial to humankind in general. In fact the modernity 'enterprise' has been so successful that it has overwhelmed our awareness of the transcendent and the resultant ethical and moral restraints this produces. This is leading to a disaster from ecological and sociological perspectives that threaten our very survival on this planet.

Having created discontent with the narrow assumptions of secular modernity he then begins to demonstrate how scientific psychological developmental and neurological theories and discoveries may provide a reasonable explanation for faith in God, which is the cure. He contends that is indeed possible for a scientific naturalist (one how believes that science has demonstrated that nothing immaterial exists) to have faith in God.

He uses the theories of developmental psychology developed by Faber's book, "The Psychological Roots of Religious Beliefs: Searching for angels and the Parent-God" to explain how the possibility for God-consciousness arises through parent-child relationships during growth. He makes the point that the culmination of this process, which frees spirituality and God-consciousness to become self reliant, fully mature and to further develop, comes when the cross of Christ is embraced in all its fullness. Thus the creator God who set in action this this growth process is indeed the author of our faith.

But the question now becomes for those influenced by scientific naturalism, "I see that I might have evolved and been developmentally nurtured to have the possibility of God-consciousness, but is this God real? Does He exist?" So Nürnberger then proceeds to show that the theory of emergence may provide a rational, scientifically acceptable explanation of how God created us, which at the same time provides evidence of his existence. It follows the line of argument of the 19th century preacher Charles Kingsley (author of 'The Water Babies') who commented on Darwin's theory of evolution, that God indeed chose to 'make all things make themselves'. This has received new impetus as a theory since the discovery of cosmological fine-tuning appears to demonstrate that the existence of the Universe, as we know it with the ability to produce humankind, depended upon pre-set, incredibly fine-tuned physical constants. Many scientist believe that this 'presetting' was probabilistically impossible without the intervention of a purposeful Creator.

Emergence theory is the hypothesis that higher orders of existence and life emerge from lower orders by a form of unaided, automatic, self-organization. Thus insentient matter can organize itself to produce life; single cell organisms can organize themselves to produce multicellular beings, unconscious life forms can organize themselves to produce conscious life forms all the way up to Homo sapiens sapiens. Indeed Nürnberger extrapolates this to include the self-organization of spirituality and God-consciousness.

Emergence is certainly a controversial concept. Christian apologists such as Lennox and McGrath find this a difficult to accept and do not believe that enough scientific evidence has yet been amassed to make it more than an idea. However the Christian astronomer Polkinghorne agrees that research seems to indicate that, 'in any complex system there are subtle thresholds that radically transform the systems behaviour when they are crossed' and thus may result in more complex, higher order systems. Moreover because the theory of emergence is advocated by leading scientists who are professed skeptics and atheists it may

help the searching 'modern' to begin to see that the idea of a biblical purposeful Creator, as witnessed to in the bible and the Christen faith, is not unreasonable.

It is with the second movement in this apologetic that I have problems. It seems to me that in his desire to present Christianity to those influenced by naturalism in lucid, understandable terms Nürnberger becomes too simple and departs, at times, from the witness of the biblical revelation. He describes his conversion and confesses that he has a personal relationship with God, has experienced answers to prayer and what he considers to be miracles. His knowledge of the bible is insightful and his biblical exegesis makes informative and interesting reading. Yet in seeking to 'make good men wish it were true' it is so easy to neglect the ineffable mystery of the Christian revelation. Christianity is anything if not a supernatural, miraculous religion. From the questions and comments that Nürnberger makes in this section of his book he is certainly fully aware of how controversial some of his doctrinal thoughts are! Maybe his purpose is to make us think and debate about these issues which can only serve to make the church aware of how these issues come across to scientific naturalists and perhaps hone our apologetics so that they become more effective.

I would agree with Barth who commented that, 'Trinity is the Christian way of saying God'. This means that I cannot accept Nürnberger's contention that the Trinity is a simple concept. Yes, indeed there is the doctrine of 'divine simplicity' that emerged in the fourth century debates about the Trinity in the early church. Yet this does not mean that humankind can understand His Being and it that it can be logically grasped or represented adequately by any metaphor. Further to this the biblical revelation of the economic Trinity (I am aware of Rahner's rule that the 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity) reveals that the three persons of the Godhead are all God who participate in the Trinity's purposing feeling, thinking, communicating and acting. I think it perhaps best to take our cue in apologetics from the presentation to the apostle Paul by the author of the Acts in chapter seventeen. He seeks to build bridges to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers by being extremely logical and rational yet ends his presentation of the Christian faith by facing them up to the supernatural reality of the miracle of Christ's resurrection. In addition he puts most of his letters within a trinitarian framework.

Finally I must admit that I agree with a comment made by a colleague of Nürnberger, which he, with commendable frankness, records in his book, that Nürnberger is in danger of robbing Christianity of its eschatological hope in expressing uncertainty about the reality of the historical

resurrection, eternal life and the parousia. Scientific naturalists might find these eschatological truths hard to swallow but surely they are the central truths of the gospel, otherwise it is no longer the good news that Jesus proclaimed.

Yet, despite this, I believe that for even for those Christians that disagree with Nürnberger about these doctrinal issues, as I do, this book has great value in contributing to an evangelical missional apologetic that can be used in sharing the gospel with scientific naturalists by helping us to understand their worldview so that we might dialogue with them. It fulfills Pascal's apologetic purposes by demonstrating that Christianity is not contrary to reason, but worthy of respect; will add to the suma bona of humankind on this planet if practiced; and that it is based on historical truth.

Rev Dr A.R. Tucker
Research Fellow: Dept. Practical Theology
University of the Free State
South Africa

Smit, Dirk J. *Remembering theologians – Doing theology. Collected essays 5,* Vosloo, R. (Ed.) (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2013).
ISBN 978-1-920689-04-9, pp. 561
http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v35i1.17

Over the years, Dirkie Smit established himself as one of South Africa's pre-eminent theologians. The publication – by Sun Press – of his academic articles in the form of "Versamelde Opstelle" and "Collected Essays" – already five books up to date – furnishes ample reason why he is highly respected by fellow theologians. Not only is he exceptionally productive with an overwhelming output, but he is also encyclopaedically informed about developments in theology. More important, his work breathes a constructive graciousness that is truly impressive.

In the foreword to the fifth volume, *Remembering theologians – Doing theology*, editor Robert Vosloo draws attention to particular features of Smit's academic work: the centrality of the notion of *conversation* and the importance of *friendship*. Doing theology implies listening to others in the present and in the past, respecting their views, and engaging in the dialogue. Our own theology is shaped by conversation partners and, in the process, we also exert some influence. This fifth volume of essays by Smit has a unique form: it comprises occasional work written expressly for specific people, events or celebrations, as reflected in the alphabetic order. We come across the names of Ackermann, Barth, Calvin, De Gruchy, Durand, Gadamer, Lategan, Moltmann, Tracy, Wainwright, Welker, and several others. The essays reveal occasional interactions with a large number of "friends".

It is impossible to distil this volume of articles *thematically*. The thirty-seven articles in Afrikaans and English address a wide range of topics: the Christology of Van de Beek, the theology of the Belhar confession, the ethics of responsibility of De Villiers, the meaning of history, the resurrection of Christ, and the list continues. However, the names of Calvin and Barth re-occur, history as well as the church emerge on several occasions. This collection of essays could be read as a window to some of the most prominent and significant discussions in the South African theological landscape. Whilst written for specific people as contribution to either Festschriften or various celebrations, the collection registers a sensitive antenna for the issues and dilemmas of our time. It attempts to retrieve the continuing significance of resources in the Reformed intellectual arsenal (for example, the theology of Calvin or confessions such as the Belgica) in order to address pressing ecclesial issues such as unity, or the social imperative of justice. The gravitation to the Reformed

heritage, the crucial role of the church and the inescapable social task of the Christian community cannot be missed.

Although it is impossible, in the limited purview of a review, to summarise the extremely rich contribution of the articles, we could draw attention to one integrating thread – a unique *manner of doing theology*. It is quite possible to read the articles with the aim of studying Smit's approach to systematic theology. The article, *Quo vadis, sistematiese teologie?*, is an extremely important contribution and deserves careful attention. It conveys an impression not only of Smit's vast learning, but also of what doing systematic theology entails. He identifies five perspectives: critical reflection on what constitutes the identity of the Christain faith, that is the Trinitarian confession; engagement with existential issues such as subjectivity, rationality and historicality; reaction to the spirit of the time – that is secularisation and spirituality, post-modernity and fundamentalism, as well as globalisation and ecology; conversation with non-Western theology, other theological and non-theological disciplines, public life and the church, other Christian traditions and with systematic theology itself, and finally worship and praise of God. These five perspectives provide a fruitful entry into the intuitions governing Smit's theology: an insistence on the uniqueness of the Christian faith; her catholic openness; her social responsibility, but also her doxological orientation. This vision could hardly be improved, and should be carefully heeded.

It is a very difficult task to evaluate the articles in this volume, as they do not aim to address one single research problem. They are occasional essays and consistently well informed and coherently argued. Any evaluation should place them intertextually in the context of Smit's entire oeuvre to determine the recurring motifs and pre-occupations. They should also be placed in the context of the history of systematic theology in South Africa; this move may reveal their particular quality. With Smit's work, South African systematic theology has come of age. Although it still has a strong Reformed orientation, it embodies a theological, philosophical and social openness and scope not, arguably, witnessed previously in South Africa.

We might demur the claim in the Introduction (p. viii) that these conversations "come from all communities and traditions". This is just too pretentious. Contemporary theological discourses have become too variegated, too pluralistic that one could make such a claim. Despite their wide scope, the essays in this volume remain Protestant, masculine, Western and middle-class oriented. No experience behind a text, no world evoked by a text could ever be adequately inclusive. Every text will have its contingency and its limitations. Conversations with non-Christian religions,

with Christian traditions such as the Orthodox and Pentecostalism, with women, with postcolonial African intellectuals, with natural science and the arts are conspicuously absent. The imperative of epistemological transformation in higher education in South Africa has made us sensitive to issues such as perspective, representivity and inclusivity with regard to intellectual traditions and the production of knowledge. No theologian, even the most gifted, could ever engage in all conversations. But some voices and their concerns do claim our attention, especially those representing a subaltern experience, and those from our own continent. The "turn to the South" has not yet been embraced by systematic theologians labouring at institutions of higher learning in South Africa. This remains a conversation that should be started. But, the conversations reflected in this volume should be overheard, and heeded. They are fascinating and important.

Prof. R. Venter
Department of Systematic Theology
Faculty of Theology
University of the Free State
South Africa

G. van den Brink & C. van der Kooi, *Christelijke dogmatiek. Een inleiding.*
(Zoetermeer: Uitgevery Boekencentrum, 2015),
ISBN: 9789023926061, pp. 772
http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v35i1.18

Die verskyning van 'n nuwe dogmatiek is vir 'n teoloog soos 'n groot doos sjokolade: Jy moet dit stadig stukkie vir stukkie proe, en jy mag dit maar geniet! Om hierdie boek van die twee professore van die Vrye Universiteit in Amsterdam deur te werk is louter vreugde. Hulle skryf 'n lekker lewendige, beeldryke Nederlands. Hulle boek is stewig gebind en hanteer maklik. En die handige registers van Bybeltekste, outeurs se name en teologiese begrippe vergemaklik herhaaldelike naslaan. Dit is so jammer dat al minder Afrikaanssprekendes deesdae gemaklik Nederlands kan lees. Miskien moet die uitgewers 'n Engelse vertaling oorweeg. Dit sal beslis 'n baie wyer afsetgebied verseker.

Waar staan dié dogmatiek in terme van hedendaagse teologiese strominge? As ek dit goed begryp, wil die outeurs aansluit by die klassieke teologie, by name die gereformeerde tradisie van hulle universiteit. Maar dié tradisie wil hulle dan uitdruklik opdateer. Om dit reg te kry, tree hulle eerstens in gesprek met die "grootste geeste" in die teologiegeskiedenis (Luther, Calvyn, Schleiermacher, Barth esm, bl 256). Vervolgens word allerlei wetenskaplike denkers van ons tyd – filosowe, antropoloë, fisici, neuroloë ens. – betrek (bv bll 251,254,295). Sodoende probeer hulle hul doel bereik, nl om 'n "lojale" (nie onkritiese nie) "ortodoksie" vanuit 'n Westerse konteks te beoefen (bl 13). Myns insiens is hulle grootste bydrae juis die magdom eietydse literatuur wat by elke hoofstuk vermeld word. Dit help die afgestudeerde teoloog om weer 'n keer op datum te kom.

Ons het dus hier geensins 'n vrysinnige teologie nie. Inteendeel, die hoofstukindeling sluit doelbewus by die Apostoliese Geloofsbelydenis en Nicea aan. Inhoudelik sou dié boek konfessioneel-gereformeerd genoem kon word. Die skrywers doen moeite om by elke leerstuk na die bekende Drie Formuliere van Eenheid te verwys en simpatiek daarby aan te sluit. Voorbeelde hiervan is legio. Selfs die (ongewilde?) Dordtse Leerreëls word gelyk gegee (bl 631 vv).

'n Verdere kenmerk van dié dogmatiek is die deeglike Skrifeksegese wat by elke onderafdeling onderneem word. Dit is die skrywers se uitgesproke doelstelling om by elke leerstuk opnuut die bronne te ondersoek en dit in die lig van die eietydse vraagstukke te interpreteer. Hier lê baie preekstof wat op ontginning wag!

Wat metode betref, sê die outeurs self dat hulle "trinitaries" en "komplementêr" te werk wil gaan (bl 427). By meer as een geleentheid probeer hulle, hoewel kortliks, 'n trinitariese benadering volg. Dit open dikwels interessante nuwe perspektiewe. Met "komplementêr" bedoel hulle om nie eensydig te wees nie en eerder na die waarheid tussen twee uiterste standpunte te soek. 'n Goeie voorbeeld hiervan is om in die versoeningsleer nie aan die geykte teenstelling van subjektiewe en objektiewe versoening vas te hou nie, maar om dit te deurbreek met die erkenning dat Christus tegelyk Oorwinnaar, Verlosser én Middelaar is (bl 413). Nog 'n voorbeeld is die voorstel om die (vermeende) spanning tussen regverdiging en heiliging deur die kategorie van partisipasie ("in Christus") te oorbrug (bl 611). Dié soort dogmatiek maak teologie opwindend.

'n Laaste uitstaande kenmerk van dié handboek is dat dit nie 'n modernistiese, intellektualistiese teologiese breingimnastiek beoefen nie. Die foto's op die buiteblad (spoelklippies en 'n dowwe spoor in die sand) herinner al aan die ondeurgrondelike geheimenis van God en sy werk in die geskiedenis (vgl bl 116, met verwysing na Ps 77:20). Hierdie dogmatiek wil die Bybelse bronne só interpreteer dat dit diensbaar sal wees aan die omgang met God (bll 305, 456). Telkens staan die skrywers in verwondering oor die groot dade van God. Daarvan kan ons slegs in geloof ontvangers (Ndl "recipiënten") wees.

By alle positiewe waardering vir die boek, hoef 'n mens uiteraard nie met alles daarin saam te stem nie. Een van die standpunte wat by my nie wil afgaan nie, is bv die filosemitisme (teenoorgestelde van antisemitisme) in die hoofstuk oor Israel en die verbond. Kan die moderne staat Israel sowaar vandag nog van teologiese betekenis wees (bl 317)?

Alles in ag geneem verdien die outers ons gelukwensing en opregte dank. Hulle het daarin geslaag om die gereformeerde dogmatiek op so 'n vlak te bring, waar ons vrymoedig met enigeen van 'n ander oortuiging in gesprek kan tree.

Prof SA Strauss
Emeritus-Professor: Dept. Dogmatologie
Universiteit van die Vrystaat
Suid-Afrika